

Revolutionary Pleasures
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Before wrecking the text and breaking the discursive laws of unified themes, those two components that mortar the ideological configuration of documentary, let us start with fantasy: physical power; escape from academia; the wilderness of unconquered terrain; impending death by frostbite, accident or bad navigation; the reenactment of the great narrative of man and now woman conquering nature with willpower and technology. To leave, for a moment, our safe, rock- and glacier-free lecture halls that require no pitons, nor dogsleds, no oxygen nor compasses, and enter a documentary world where signification means reading topographic maps and where deconstruction means breaking your bivouac or losing your mainsail in following seas.

This other discursive terrain poses as anything but discursive: it is natural, material, indomitable, and overpowering: the world of the 1987 PBS documentary series "Adventure". If we detour from the utopian pleasures of revolution for a moment and investigate the PBS series 'Adventure,' perhaps we can place the political necessity for a more diverse, discursive, discontinuous, and heterogeneous documentary practice into greater relief. We may be able to demonstrate by counterexample, its urgency as both a political intervention and as a revival of what Jurgen Habermas identifies as communicative action, what film theorists name active spectatorship, what the rest of us might simply dub political participation, or what Marx might call making history.

Beginning in January of 1987, PBS broadcast a weekly series of one-hour documentaries on various adventures around the world, hosted by Dodge Morgan, who himself circumnavigated the globe single-handedly on his sailboat. The adventures we observe from the safe confines of our couches range from a 1000-mile dogsled race in the Yukon, a woman's climb of K2 in the Himalayas, a middle-aged Englishman's solo climb of the north face of the Eiger, a balloon expedition over Mt. Everest, and, of course, a super-8 film of Morgan's own sailing expedition. Besides witnessing the heroics of each adventurer's physical power, endurance, and commitment to outwitting and conquering nature, each film has yet another hero, operating in partnership with the screen presence, but invisible to us: the cameraperson. Sometimes, as in the K2 climb, the cameraperson figures as a character, while other times, as in the Morgan episode, the cameraperson is replaced by the technological advances of the remote switch. The dyad of the adventurer who battles nature and the adventurer who battles camera technology betrays the impossibility of the unmediated expedition and the unmediated text and terrain. Indeed, the spectacle of the expedition, whether Everest, K2, the Yukon, the South Pole, or the Eiger, summons the companion spectacle of the equally physical and savvy cameraperson battling composition, exposure, good sound, and narrative coherence. In effect we witness the collaboration of romanticism and modernism, of the individual and the machine.

This doubling of spectacle--the human by the technological, the technological by the human--swallows up the once emancipatory Brechtian potential of self-reflexivity and the exposure of

the means of production, spitting them out as the media version of the necessary gear one orders from REI or Wilderness Experience before a climb. Spectacle permeates all levels of the “Adventure” image: the content, the production, and even the reproduction. Everyone, everything, every place exceeds us. Every image demands an immobilized gaze. Our participation in the series is less one of passive awe than of spiritual reverence for this revival of rugged individualism and simple narratives like man or woman against nature. Not only does “Adventure” celebrate the technological and rational advances of late capitalism that allow this individualism to flourish but it simultaneously vilifies a previous history of bad maps, poor tent, death, and destruction as the consequences of a primitive, scientifically underdeveloped capitalism. The slow-paced, electronic New Age music threaded throughout each film quotes religious hymns in tone but reproduces them with the dexterity and predictability of electronic music. This aural equivalent of a Gregorian chant encodes technological control as mystical and transcendental. “Adventure,” then, suggests that technology and individual derring-do can transcend history.(1)

In a larger context, three analyses loom around this series. First, while ravenously coopting critical apparatuses like self-reflexivity and lightweight cameras, the series is heavily invested with the assumptions of modernism: the idea of the unified subject, a refusal of mass culture, a notion of the individual at his or her limits, the spectator expanding her possibilities through another’s vision, an investigation into extending the medium and its forms through technology. (2)

As one flips through the TV Guide, it may seem an outrageous confusion and a preposterous assertion to identify the “Adventure” series as “modernist.” If compared to modernist film classics like Jean Vigo’s *A Propos de Nice* (1928), Dziga Vertov’s *Man With the Movie Camera* (1928), or Walter Ruttman’s *Berlin. Symphony of a Great City* (1927), the “Adventure” series does not unreel as a formal tour de force, as an exploration of the formal boundaries of the medium. It does not utilize canted angles nor explosive editing. On the surface, comparing “Adventure” to these films may seem like comparing macaroni and cheese to jambalaya. However, in relation to other films in the adventure genre, say, for example, a typical *National Geographic* special on kayaking in Iceland or on polar bears, this series situates its excellence, its uniqueness, its significance, and its difference from its more mundane predecessors through its style. This cinematic style depends on, at minimum, a veneer of modernist techniques: atonal music connoting high art, lightweight equipment signifying an ability to create different images, and self-reflexivity representing both authorship and subjectivity. All of these strategies signal the interiorization of what was previously only physical.

Secondly, the series inscribes itself politically through its historical absences and its amnesia, perhaps from a falling rock or attitude sickness, of our contemporary social and political context. In 1987, one could, for example, if one had an expanded tier cable system and a remote, watch both “Adventure” and the less beautifully photographed and less interestingly paced Iran-Contra Hearings--a sort of postmodern pastiche of male adventures in the third world. While its surface (cinematography, music, voice-over, and sometimes editing) denotes experimentation within the rather staid boundaries of the adventure epic, “Adventure”’s content locates it within the realm of bourgeois individualism and an eternal, ahistorical sphere, of conquest. Will, challenge, and triumph. Because most of the “Adventure” films chronicle individual rather than collective efforts,

they ratify an obsessive egocentrism, one replicated in the media construction of figures such as Ivan Boesky, Donald Trump, H. Ross Perot, and Lee Iacocca. These films present determination, planning, and drive as exempt from social relations, historical context, or capitalism. Despite their exotic geographical mice-en-scene, they deny a geography of locations, borders, cultures, people, struggles, and cultural difference. Instead, they trace an interior geography of the adventurer's psyche.

Thirdly, along the lines of Ariel Dorfman's analysis of the Lone Ranger, one can analyze the series as the exploitation of the third world as-itself unmediated nature and spectacle by first-world, bourgeois, white people, who rely on third-world sidekicks for guidance, map reading, and hauling. (3) These lone rangers of the mountains, the seas, the tundra, and the rocks are examples of the magnificence of multinational capitalism's financing of nineteenth-century myths: exploration; individualism, decontextualized and floating free; control over nature and technology; and administrative abilities to organize, lead, and persevere. Of course, all of these analyses are true and are the stuff of our trade, our own class position as academics, and our own discursive pleasure as expedition leaders into textuality, contextuality, and intertextuality.

But, in a more dialectical assault (or to use "Adventure" terminology, ascent), I would also like to extract the components of the pleasures of this series "Adventure" and resuscitate them for a larger notion of politics and documentary. Whether we deconstruct, psychoanalyze, historicize, or politicize "Adventure" for its uninformed allegiance to a unified text and passive spectatorship, its continuities, its formal elegance, its insistence on the seamless reproduction of the real, and its supposed naturalization of representation, there still remains in the rubble of pitons, codes, ice axes, and theories, a pleasure and subjectivity that can be utilized and strategized. The pleasures in the rubble here imbricate the pleasures of the future, of fantasy, of hope. These are pleasures not of the text but of place, history, the body, and geography. These pleasures position spectators in the domain of escape from their own geographic confines and the redundancy of work into the challenge of the unknown where mind and body are not separated. These pleasures also invoke the fantasy of one's own necessary, significant, arid sufficient subjectivity, of sharing experience with others, of the imagination required by the unknown. They insist on action and control in the face of increasing bureaucratization and automation. These pleasures are not so simply bourgeois and reactionary reductions of the complexities of modern life since they contain, at least, the fantasy of action, change, and integration with nature. Terry Eagleton has argued, for example, that modernism both expresses and mystifies a sense of one's own historical conjuncture as being somehow peculiarly pregnant with crisis and change. He insists on a more dialectical exchange between modernism's myths of the individual and postmodernism's foraging into discontinuity, multiplicity, and fractured subjects, themselves too easily revived in a reactionary pluralism where political actions and struggle don't matter as much as diffusion and dispersion. He argues for the reintegration of art and politics, for art's participation in social relations. (4)

Before working through the documentary intervention of what I have termed new compilation documentary, I have attempted to position it in struggle and relationship to this more pervasive, digestible, and seamless form proliferated in the "Adventure" series, a sort of continuum

extending from naturalized modes of representation and history to a more deliberately constructed and dissected practice of interrogating representation as authenticity and inscribing history.

Andreas Huyssen has argued, for example, that the historical avant-garde and mass culture participate in a “hidden dialectic.” The avant-garde depends on mass culture as its Other, as a measure of its distance from homogenized cultural practice. He further explains that mass culture in the twentieth century would not be possible without technologies of mass production. However, technology infuses this historical avant-garde: Huyssen cites dynamism, machine cult, collage, assemblage, montage, and photomontage as evidence. Art, he claims, “liberated technology from its instrumental aspects.”⁽⁵⁾ This dialectic between the avant-garde and mass culture, a dialectic that hinges on a mutual disavowal but simultaneous dependency, informs a reading of the formation of documentary. While the classic documentary style of “Adventure” seems light years and ideologies away from a more polemical, political, and aggressive compilation documentary, it too functions within a hidden dialectic. New compilation documentaries reassess and reinscribe more classical documentary texts within their argument and historical analysis, marking their discursive difference and designating their meta-communicative power. On the other hand, “Adventure” anchors narratives in individuality and bounds them with one uninterrupted space (mountain or sea, for instance), establishing their coherency against fragmentation, against urbanity, against economic modernization. Huyssen has suggested that the importance of a critical postmodernism, a practice that critiques the homogenization, enervation, and depoliticization of mass culture rather than affirming its surface play, resides in its ability to reject the split between mass culture and the avant-garde to reestablish the political necessity of art and politics. These new compilation documentaries operate, then, in two modes: on the one hand, they depend on the hidden dialectic of their more conservative Other for their innovative force, on the other hand they agitate for a practice that crosses discursive borders and imbricates history and politics. While there are many forms of documentary in the middle, from cinema verité to diary to compilation films to historical films, it is these outer borders that frame the basic epistemological and political questions of documentary.

In the contemporary context of the 1980s East Coast art-scene rush toward postmodern stylistic strategies of pastiche, quotation, refusal of authorship, the banishing of the unified subject, and appropriation of mass media, it is politically important to ask what this simultaneous piecing together and fracturing of subjects yields. What is the nature, scope, and consequence of its significance in a climate of political reaction, dispersion of government power, and intervention in the third world? What much postmodern theory and art making jettisons is historical specificity, memory, and action, celebrating the multiple and the fractured subject as a war hero of ideology.

Social historian Stuart Ewen has documented how mass culture itself has discarded specificity and history through style. He points out that the progression of ‘style’ in the twentieth century evidences the co-optation of modernism’s technological efficiency as initially exemplified in the Bauhaus by corporate power: form follows function is translated into streamlined form, whose only function is the communication of power. Ewen locates this streamlining in many cultural practices, from furniture to architecture to body type to industrial logo design. Politically, streamlining concentrates on surface and therefore obscures power relations, place, labor, and

history. The IBM logo stands as testimony to this trend. Ewen's description of the modern engineer extends to modern mass culture: "the herald of a universal, transhistoric truth. His vision was not chained to a particular sensibility of a time or a place. It transcends specificity; its glory rested upon the timeless 'pleasure of geometric forms'." (6) Ewen locates modernism's technological fascination within the economic and historical context of the modernization of mass culture. He demonstrates how this movement of modernist art principles toward a congruence with and visual representation of corporate power relies on a denial of history. Ewen's analysis of cars, ads, physical culture cults, and architecture as emphasizing both surface and the constant evolution toward an etherealized timelessness parallels the "Adventure" film series.

Yet Ewen's claims are also applied to postmodern practice, where streamlining and juking history occurs in the concentration on style and surface exclusively. His analysis of an IBM commercial that quotes an image of Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times* (1936) illustrates this denuding of politics by surface quotation. The original Chaplin film critiques industrial capitalism for trivializing human needs to serve production and offers images of rebellion, resistance, and imagination. In the IBM ad, the figure of Chaplin is overwhelmed by work but is ultimately accommodated to the service economy of late capitalism by the computer. (7) Thus, the image of Chaplin transfers from narrative film to a 30-second commercial, but the substance and meaning become unusable, cultural residue, arcane politics. Many critics like Eagleton, Hal Foster, and Huyssen have identified this articulation of postmodernism as affirmative rather than critical. Ewen's book contributes some clarification to these distinctions by demonstrating the necessity of history, specificity of place, and a rejection of pure surface for a meaningful political practice. In other words, affirmative postmodernism effectively streamlines cultural practice into pure image and style, amputating it from meaning and context so that it can travel through various cultural forms—from ads to art and back again--without consequence. All meaning, all politics, all struggle settle onto the image.

The new compilation documentary, in the work of Jean-Pierre Gorin, Laura Kipnis, Martha Haslanger, Chris Marker, Dusan Makavejev, Fernando Solanas, and Eduardo Coutinho, provides an intriguing crossroads between postmodernism and history since these films foreground the reviving, remaking, and refiguring of history and the celebration of the revolutionary pleasures of active spectatorship in the public sphere. This category of documentary can be periodized from the 1950s, with the early films of Marker such as *Letter from Siberia* (1957), to the current time. While this analysis will concentrate on works produced in the 1980s, it is important to note that Makavejev's and Marker's early work, and Solanas's *Hour of the Furnaces* (1968), represent early interventions and models. Too frequently, compilation films that explore a more critical view of history as historiography, as the interrogation of archival sources, explanation, structure, relationship, and ideology, are tagged as art documentaries, a naming that institutionalizes their political struggle within museums and alternative spaces. In effect, the context of this compilation documentary that investigates discursive formations rather than narrative history coincides with the penetration of television into the home and the development of new technologies like home video, which make it easy to "steal" images, the advent of global news via satellite, which decomposes the relationship between time, distance, and immediacy, and the growth of the international film festival circuit.

In painting, architecture, dance, and photography, recent experimental work (or at least that exhibited in museums) that transgresses boundaries between mass culture and the avant-garde has been labeled postmodernist by critics and scholars. The definition of postmodernism has grown diffuse, as it is increasingly applied to any form of art or MTV that invokes and critiques the mass media by refusing authorial vision and collaging or quoting. This essay, however, defines the term less formally and more politically: critical postmodernism as a strategy to deconstruct the obscured structures and dynamics between history, producer, context, object, and art production by focusing on the relations between these processes and between multiple voices and discourses. In other words, it is a strategy and a politics of exposing power and promoting heterogeneity. For example, photography located by critics within the postmodern school involves a pastiche of mass-mediated imagery arranged to foreground ideological relations rather than to revel in the formal renditions of more overt subject matter, meaning, or form, as is the case for the rephotography of great works of photography by Sherrie Levine, the coopting of ads by Doug Prince, or the political collages of Barbara Kruger. However, much of this work ignores cultural differences and presents only textual critique.

In the manner of Jean-François Lyotard, who claims that the postmodern condition can be characterized by a global information order that destroys national boundaries, (8) exemplified in films like Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1977) or by Haslinger's *The Revolution* (1979-83), I have deliberately selected a group of films bound by a concern for historiography: an interest in the meta-level of explanation and archive, a commitment to multiple media forms as historical fact, practices, and discourses, and a rhetorical, argumentative position that explodes the processes of discursive formation, argumentation, political action, and geography. While I aim to discuss these films more generally for what they offer documentary theory, I do not mean to trivialize their historical and political significance, nor to argue for a politically correct form of documentary practice. Instead, I would like to utilize them as a springboard to discuss some crucial theoretical terms for assessing documentary film as a communicative, interactive discourse and practice rather than as a marginalized subgenre of film studies, as economic or textual venture, or another, more quotable, unmarred brand of intertextuality.

Indeed, the political problem of intertextuality--as texts echoing, repeating, and reformulating each other--can be witnessed in these films, since they rely less on texts and more on discourses, political struggles, and contexts for their collaging. These films construct geography and space, thus presenting analysis as adventure. Analytically, all documentary chronicles multiple relations rather than merely content or story, extending from the simplest level of relationships between producers, their subjects, and representation, as in the "Adventure" series, to the more complex level of their relationship and communication with history and subjects. An example from Gorin's *Routine Pleasures* (1986), a recently released film about an all-male club in California committed to building model train sets, may clarify this position. Shot in long takes in wide angle, this black and white film intermingles scenes of the men obsessing about the details of their miniature town and railroad so that its geography and architecture replicate their ideologically loaded vision of "the real" with shots of Manny Farber's paintings (Gorin's spiritual and artistic mentor) and Gorin's personal voice-over describing his awe and analysis of these men and of Farber's relationship to constructing objects, whether toy trains or art. It is a film entirely composed of male voices and technological obsessions, sneaking into the world of trains and art and cinema to dislodge notions of male control, pleasure, and art making. It destroys the boundaries between high and low art, between art and the everyday. It is a film that

utilizes a variety of discourses and representational strategies to fabricate a different position toward history and toward the subject. For history here is not something to unearth in an archive or digest in a book but is something to be made and intervened in through as many diverse approaches--from trains to men to art to cinema to the United States--as one needs. The subject position here is also one of process, of exploration, and of being thrown outside of conventions and the easily definable geography of genres and codes so that, even as a woman, one can participate. The juxtaposition, recombination, and friction between these multiple voices--speaking to each other in the film through contiguity--dislodges spectatorial privilege and control. We draw our own topographic maps through this discursive struggle that discloses the political struggle of technology, gender, and art.

In this context of contemporary media and art practice, this new compilation documentary film and video presents an intriguing site from which to excavate political issues that have been buried in a flurry of multiplicity: the notion of history, the formation of the historical, collective subject, the idea of the discursive as embedded in power rather than in a disconnected diffusion and communicative action. Much of the tradition of documentary film, for instance, revolves on the use of compilation footage in three ways: as evidence, as critique, and as marker of ideology. Work in this area of compilation documentary has spanned from the propaganda of Frank Capra's "Why We Fight" (1945) series, which smoothed over the disjunctions and ruptures of compilation with a pro-World War II ideology, to Emile de Antonio's work, which employs compilation footage as damning evidence against the Vietnam War or Joe McCarthy, to Bruce Conner, who utilizes compilation as a critique against the forms of mediation we are subjected to, such as in *A Movie* (1958). While never simply pastiche for the sake of the collision possibilities of collage, the more traditional compilation film was ordered to prove a political argument so that the audience could change previously held positions. The number of historical documentaries produced in the 1960s and 1970s that rekindled a marginalized history with archival footage attests to the political efficacy and urgency of this form. There is no debate about the accessibility and larger political significance of these more narrative historical works, such as *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980, directed by Connie Field) and *The Times of Harvey Milk* (1984, directed by Robert Epstein and Richard Schmeichen), as agents of social change and as radical films aired on conservative PBS.

However, it is still vitally important to evaluate the epistemological assumptions about the mode of explanation in history and its relationship to evidence, the spectator and collective struggles crossing race, gender, and class lines in compilation documentaries. While I would be the first to agree that narrative linear historical explanations, as Eagleton maintains, matter so that we can place ourselves in the world, it is a mode of explanation that may ignore more discursive historical issues of contexts, continuity, and relationships, methods that may illuminate the articulation of power in addition to issues of what happened. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, it may be significant to understand how new compilation documentary creates an object and a content by piecing together multiple discourses and voices and disassembling the formation in which they are embedded and concealed. (9) Indeed, Foucault's own language is the language of "Adventure": he deploys terms from geography to determine the politics of place. This strategy challenges traditional documentary practice, which has originated with content or subject matter. In these works, discursive practice reverses itself: rather than object suggesting a discourse, discourse constitutes objects of study.

In these new compilation documentaries, issues of discourses, continuity, and explanation as interrogation and process emerge as the historical position and intervention of the film. For instance, Solanas's *Hour of the Furnaces*, an early work in this area, equally chronicles the class structure and ideological positions of Argentina as it reinvents historical explanation and its components as one of a series of interlocking relationships between ideology, the ruling class, international investment, and revolutionary analysis. Similarly, Coutinho, in his *20 Years Later* (1984), a film from Brazil, also assails historical explanation. By returning to the village he filmed in 20 years earlier, during a popular front campaign, Coutinho questions his responsibility as a filmmaker to the political realities of exile for speaking publicly within one's own country. The film itself alternates between historical footage shot in a Salt of the Earth style, social-realist narrative, archival film and photographs, and contemporary, on-the-spot interviews with previous participants from the earlier film. The film questions historical responsibility as it insists that documentary film itself creates history by participating in it. Instead of deploying the footage to support an argument, the archival elements decompose the privilege of the filmmaker and give voice to subjects previously exiled both in filmmaking and in Brazil. The elderly woman heroine reunites with her family and Coutinho in the end; she engages with politics, the family, and her own representation after her husband's political assassination, proclaiming the need for struggle.

Because these new compilation films by Gorin, Marker, Haslinger, Makavejev, and Solanas refute the seamless relations between author and subject, they jettison the formal and argumentative regularity of a unified visual style, working instead on the ruptures and intersections. This issue of history and memory anchors these compilation documentaries in a dynamic political praxis. This praxis itself includes context, relations to linear history, and relations to various levels of mediation and interaction (from media to politics), to exploration, to the future, and to a meaningful, committed subjectivity. John Hess, comparing third-world film to Italian neorealism, has argued, for instance, that third-world film evidences the prevalence of history and memory. Invoking Franz Fanon, he maintains that cultural renewal involves a recovery of national culture, history, and personal memory as tools of emancipation. (10)

In place of a linear and natural historical explanation, these films wreck the text by using multiple texts, reordering and resetting them. They break open discursive laws of representation, history, and argument by shifting through different media (stills, music, film, cartoons) and different voices (political, personal, logical, aesthetic). They play with this multiplicity and instability as a process, as a discontinuity, and as an intervention and reinvention into historical explanation and the position of the historical subject as a collective agent in both the private and public spheres. While the "Adventure" series constructs individuals, these compilation documentaries elaborate a historical, collective subject.

Ranging from topics like sexual commodification in Kipnis's *Ecstasy Unlimited* (1985) to Siberia in *Letter from Siberia* to revolution and personal life in *The Revolution*, these films share a historical mode that spans the public and private spheres, repudiating the separation of history from memory, the archival trace from the more personal or discursive. They also offer a more exploratory and imaginative spectator position. In this sense, these films create a position of action for the historical subject, a subject who is not individual but collective, not psychologized but multiple and discursive, not constructed by the formation of the semiotic system of the text

but constructing the text, context, and history. As Craig Owens has noted, the purpose of deconstruction is to decenter and expose the impurity of meaning. (11)

In the case of this group of new compilation documentaries, the individual, psychoanalytic product of the text is decentered and replaced by a more historical subject and subjects. Of course, this paradigm of the spectator continually inventing and participating in the text and history recalls Vertov, whose films and theories suggested that the work of the film resided in the work of the spectator and the filmmaker, not exclusively in the formal innovations of the text. While some postmodern and poststructuralist theory explodes the subject into multiple fragments, like a tent shredded by a storm on K2, and while subjects like ourselves work and live within multiple discourses (we are teachers and scholars, parents, athletes, personal and political, rock climbers, rafters, and deconstructors), this fracturing may leave only political inertia and despair in its wake. Thus, the multiple discourses offered in these films--from ideology to history to media to interview to reconstructions--present this dispersion not as a pessimistic, nihilistic fragmentation of the spectator but as a series of relations that induce, seduce, and demand the spectator to enjoin and engender the public sphere.

For example, Kipnis's *Ecstasy Unlimited* presents sexuality and the business of sex as a discursive formation: she interviews sex s/m workers and businessmen, creates pseudo-commercials for sexual gratification, explains psychoanalysis, and uses *Sesame Street* singsong lyrics and childish graphics to explain commodification. She demonstrates the imperialistic codes of the missionary position by having a woman on the bottom of a copulating couple explaining the interpenetration of capitalism and sexuality. Although these modes quote commercials, soap operas, *Sesame Street*, cartoons, lectures, cinema verite network news, and performance art, the thrust, so to speak, of *Ecstasy Unlimited* remains the historical subject. This spectator must assert, simultaneously, her fantasy, subjectivity, collectivity, escape, and exploration, and must bring her own formation of sexuality to the film. In the terms of Anthony Wilden, this is an open system, one whose dynamics depend upon the dislodging of passivity and privatization. (12) Of course, theorizing this historical subject of new compilation documentary does not necessarily prove that she or he exists, nor does it explain how she or he operates. However, these films and tapes, like *Hour of the Furnaces*, *Sans Soleil* and *Ecstasy Unlimited*, in their passionate exploration of multiple forms and ideas, invite the committed and public subjectivity only teased by the "Adventure" series: challenge, escape, fantasy, exploration, imagination. These films speak to historical specificity as exploration and to personal commitment as a necessary and sufficient subjectivity: Makavejev's Yugoslavia and the first talkie produced during resistance to the Nazis, or Coutinho's Brazil and implications of media-makingg and personal responsibility.

In the case of Haslanger's *Revolution*, Patty Hearst's pseudo-revolutionary stance rams against Rosa Luxemburg's personal letters about her fantasies of home and family. But the Luxemburg letters are illustrated with television shows on ballerinas, ads for suburban housing, and military training film. With Jim Jones quotes on revolution laid over a tour film of Washington monuments, Haslanger dissects the discontinuities in the discursive formation of revolution by using personal statements as sandpaper to media constructions. For Marker, *Sans Soleil* ingests a global perspective from Japanese consumerism to Africa to the North with a voice-over in the form of a letter that wonders about their relationship and significance. In both films, travel,

representation, ideology, and political multiplicity are tittered through the subjective writing of a letter of direct address.

Finally, these new compilation documentaries would appear to solve the problem of the decentered subject by situating a notion of discourse within the historical and political necessity of communicative interaction. Foucault has shown how discourses as formalized statements constitute the minute workings of power. In his more historical studies, he investigates how multiple discourses, from notions of the prison to madness to sexuality, articulated power relations in minute, specific forms that were material and discursive, and created sites that subjects could occupy. However, this idea of discourse may be inadequate to evaluate how these compilation films instigate a site of action, history, and resistance. In these films, the relations between discourses, their jamming against one another, the decentering of content for power, sustains a place where spectators can interact, piece together, make history.

Habermas has discussed this interaction with history and the public sphere, with social interrelationships and political action as communicative action. He discusses the limitations of the technical domination of nature--paralleled by the "Adventure" film series, text-based criticism, or academic theory that retreats from the specificity of history and community. He argues that this technical domination is a solitary and silent act based on authority. Instead, he calls for a revival of a somewhat liberal notion of communicative action, a negotiated agreement among active subjects who desire to control their social relations practically. (13) With their piecing together dispersed, discontinuous, and multiple discourses and their project of unpacking these relations, these compilation films may create a possibility for a negotiated, specific agreement between the film and its subjects and the history they both create. We can, like the heroes and heroines in the "Adventure" film series, cross borders to Brazil, Argentina, Japan, Yugoslavia, feminist politics, men's trains, sexuality, and Siberia. And we can also, like geographic adventurers, challenge the unknown and make history by activating the discourses in these films.

The epistemological grounds of these new compilation documentaries have shifted. Previous compilation films reviewed history: these films activate history by constructing revolutionary pleasures no longer solely dependent on the content of the image itself. Intervening in texts, contexts, community, discourses, and spectatorship, these films embolden an avant-garde strategy of playing with textual material through various techniques of displacement, refiguration, and multiple authors. However, they destroy textual authority. While they dissolve binary oppositions between politics and personal life, between public history and personal memory, between analysis and pleasure, and between ideology and practice, they operate between the relations of discourse rather than within a specific content area. While some may see these films as yet another version of pastiche with their floating signifiers and quotation, their integration of historical specificity, a more discursive and multiple historical explanation, pleasure, and reception locates their political power. In fact, were I to program the "Adventure" series, it would feature Hastanger, Solanas, Kipnis, Gorin, Coutinho, Marker, and Makavejev. And were I to program a film conference on poststructuralism, it would feature a mandatory raft trip down endangered rapids encroached by industry where everyone would paddle.

NOTES

1. Many writers have commented on how more commercial adventure films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, directed by Steven Spielberg), *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984, directed by Steven Spielberg), *Crocodile Dundee* (1986, directed by Peter Faiman), and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985, directed by George P. Cosmatos) promote individual action as an agent that goes beyond history and national borders. For example, see Gaylyn Studlar and David Desser, "Never Having to Say You're Sorry: Rambo's Rewriting of the Vietnam War," *Film Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (Fall 1988): pp. 9-16 and Meaghan Morris, "Tooth and Claw: Tales of Survival and Crocodile Dundee," in *The Pirate's Fiancee: Feminism Reading Postmodernism* (London: Verso. 1988). pp. 241269.
2. The definition and periodization of modernism as both a historical formation and style are typically identified with the historical avant-garde (surrealism, constructivism, futurism), where experimental art participated in the public sphere through cultural intervention, critique, and shock. Through its recuperation by mass culture, modernism has shed this more political connection and has been whittled down to surface and style that can move easily through capitalist culture. See Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press. 1985) and Peter Burger. *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1984).
3. Arief Dorfman, "The Lone Ranger's Last Ride." in *The Empire's Old Clothes* (New York: Pantheon Books. 1983). pp. 67-134.
4. Terry Eagleton. "Capitalism. Modernism and Postmodernism" in *Against the Grain* (London: Verso. 1986). pp. 131-148.
5. Andreas Huyssen. "The Hidden Dialectic: Avantgarde-Technology-Mass Culture." in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1986). p. 11.
6. Stuart Ewen. *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books. 1988). p. 137.
7. Ibid.. pp. 97-98.
8. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. 1984).
9. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper and Row. 1972).
10. John Hess. "Third World Film and Italian Neorealism," unpublished paper, 1987.
11. Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism." in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (Boston: David R. Godine. 1984), pp. 203-235.
12. Anthony Wilden. *System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange* (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd. 1972).
13. Jurgen Habermas. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press. 1987).